



31

Hobo Advice

## Trainhopping: Why Choose Trainhopping?

(self.vagabond)

submitted 3 months ago \* by [huckstah](#) **Trainhopper / Hitchhiker**

Most of America is typically unaware that there is an entire subculture of travelers still hopping freight trains in America. For many, it's a lifestyle they assumed died in the 1930's, with visions of migratory workers stealing apple pies from window sills.

Unfortunately, as with many subcultures, those are just stereotypes from books and movies. The hobo culture is still alive and well. In fact, in the past decade, it has been one of the fastest growing forms of travel for low-income and homeless travelers, making a huge comeback alongside hitchhiking. The new generation of hobos has ensured that this form of traveling is not going to die anytime soon.

If you've already read [Trainhopping: Why NOT Trainhopping](#), you are already aware of the many reasons why trainhopping has its

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dangers and disadvantages.

In this this post, I'd like to go over the many reasons why trainhopping has its benefits and advantages over any other form of travel. There are several reasons, and I'll go over just a few of them here.

- **Trainhopping is FREE!**

The best part about trainhopping is that it's FREE! Not only in terms of money, but also in terms of spirit, the view, the history, and the subculture of friends you meet along the way.

Although this is the most dangerous forms of traveling, it is definitely the most free. You'll likely never find yourself wanting to hitchhike or take a bus ever again. Speaking of buses:

- **Because Buses Sucks!**

Not only are major buses (such as Greyhound) expensive for low-income travelers, it's also an extremely uncomfortable form of transportation.

Out of personally spending thousands of miles riding greyhound buses across the USA, I have yet to enjoy a single hour on that bus.

Finding a sleeping position in that little seating area is absolutely impossible. Not only is the leg room minimal, but you are usually squashed up against a stranger and have little room to lean or stretch.

And then there's the babies crying, the fat people snoring, the one guy that smells like dog shit, the one lady that wont shut up

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on her cell phone, the one teenager that plays his headphones so loud you can hear it from 5 rows back, the driver that acts like he wants to shoot himself, the stops in which your only choice to eat is at a gas station, etc etc, the list goes on and on and on.

After 10 years on the road, I hate Greyhound and other buses so much that even if I CAN afford a bus ticket, I'll still choose hopping a train or hitchhiking over riding that dreadful bus.

- **Because Amtrak is EXPENSIVE!**

Let's face it, if you can afford to ride Amtrak, you probably have no business trainhopping or hitchhiking unless you are merely doing it for adventure and thrills. Although Amtrak is far more comfortable than Greyhound, the prices are absolutely outrageous. In fact, it is often actually cheaper to FLY as opposed to riding Amtrak.

- **Trainhopping vs Hitchhiking:**

If you ask any hitchhiker, they will be quick to tell you a couple of horror stories of their experiences on the road. From stories of drunk-drivers wrecking the vehicle, to stories of rape and sexual assault, you never know who is going to pick you up on the road. "It's not the hitchhiker that you have to watch out for, its the people that pick up hitchhikers" is a common quote in the adventurous subculture of hitchhiking.

This is where trainhopping has its advantage. Sure, its obvious that you can get physically hurt trying to hop on a moving freight train, but aside from that, it's a relatively safe form of travel. You don't have to worry about your driver being drunk, and you don't have to worry about anyone trying to assault you or otherwise

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make you uncomfortable. It's just you, the train, and the conductor & engineer.

- **Nothing beats the view from a train!**

Trains often go where no other roads go, carving through mountains and valleys that are far from anyway highway or town. Not only is the view often incredible, but also consider the fact that you aren't looking at it from tiny box with windows. There is nothing quite like standing in the open door of a boxcar and seeing a panoramic and unobstructed view of the vast landscape and surroundings.

\*6) \* \* My favorite thing about hopping trains is the amount of freedom and privacy that you won't get from any other form of travel. Want to pop a beer? Go right ahead! Feel like smoking a cigarette or a joint? Light it up! Want to stand up and walk around, or lay down and go to sleep? There's plenty of space! Want to listen to a song and sing along with it at the top of your voice? Turn it up! You can pretty much do whatever you want without bothering a single soul in the world, or without anyone else telling you otherwise. To me, there is nothing like sitting in the boxcar, popping a bottle of wine, and lighting a cigarette as the world flies by.

- **Beware: It is ADDICTIVE!**

With most people, the concept of hopping freight trains is a love/hate relationship. That is, there are people that absolutely hate it, and the are people that absolutely love it. There is not much of a middle ground. But for those that love it, it becomes extremely addictive. The thrill of catching out of town on a train

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gives you a rush that can be compared to sex or heroin, and is equally addictive as both. Although I personally use a mix of trainhopping and hitchhiking in many of my travels, I will easily admit that hopping trains is my preferable choice. The combination of the thrill and freedom makes it a cocktail that can be extremely hard to resist.

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[-] **ISIS\_CALM\_THE\_F\_DOWN** 9 points 3 months ago

Great post, thankyou. If only the freight trains here in Europe didn't travel at like 70mph and weren't electrified, and if you get caught, people think your a terrorist or theif, not just getting a free ride. ah such is life

[permalink](#)



[-] **[deleted]** 7 points 3 months ago

Prepping for 1yr+ of hitchhiking the western United States and after this reading I'm thinking about trainhopling at some point.

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[-] **huckstah** **Trainhopper / Hitchhiker** **S** 6 points 2 months ago

It's an awesome form of travel as long as stay safe and learn from someone that really knows what they are doing.

[permalink](#) [parent](#)



[-] **fotografamerika** 13 points 3 months ago

I'd like to try it. Any advice on how to read trains/yards and how to not get caught or killed?


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[-] **huckstah** **Trainhopper / Hitchhiker** **S** 8 points 2 months ago


Do it with someone that has done it before! Get them to teach you all the tips and tricks.


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 [-] **thinkmcfly\_think** 6 points 3 months ago  
Would you consider writing a little introductory post on trainhopping? Sounds really interesting  
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 [-] **huckstah** **Trainhopper / Hitchhiker** **S** 4 points 2 months ago  
Just wrote a few. Check the sidebar now. Thanks for the awesome suggestion :)  
[permalink](#) [parent](#)

 [-] **ArksTheArks** 5 points 3 months ago  
Does anybody know about train-hopping in central Europe? Is it possible?  
[permalink](#)

 [-] **Notenough1997** 1 point 1 month ago  
considering trains are considered a more valid form of transportation there, I'd wager that you are more likely to be caught/found out.  
[permalink](#) [parent](#)

 [-] **beginnavagabond** 4 points 3 months ago  
Will anything happen to you if someone sees you on the train such as when you pass a road?  
[permalink](#)

 [-] **huckstah** **Trainhopper / Hitchhiker** **S** 8 points 3 months ago  
If they're being citizen-nazi, they could call the cops and the cops will have your train stopped to remove you. It hasn't happened to me or anyone that I've ever traveled with, but I definitely duck down when going through towns or crossings  
[permalink](#) [parent](#)

 [-] **zoobeasty** 6 points 3 months ago\*  
In some of the pictures you share (like [this](#) one), you are in an empty engine car that has seats, windows, tables, etc. IT was basically equal to a private room on Amtrak, and those costs hundreds of dollars. Hopping on one of those might be the best possible way to travel for free  
[permalink](#)



[–] [huckstah](#) [Trainhopper / Hitchhiker](#) [S](#) 3 points 2 months ago

Indeed ;-)

[permalink](#) [parent](#)



[–] [YWxpY2lh](#) 2 points 2 months ago

Thanks so much for all of your informative posts on here. I'm reading through and really enjoying them.  
Good travels!

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